

Meinrad Kopp
Reg-No. 68931-018
United States Penitentiary Tucson
P.O. Box 24550
Tucson, AZ 85734

March, 23 2021

American Prison Writing
Hamilton College
198 College Road
Clinton, New York, NY 10019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Meinrad Kopp, I am a German national and a German citizen. As this is my first contact with American Prison Writing, please allow a short sentence of introduction.

I have been arrested in June 2017, following a week of business meetings in the United States. I do not want to minimize that I broke a U.S. law, but it is also worth mentioning that I was entrapped by a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Officer in an operation while I was overseas, at home. This sort of sting operation is illegal and prohibited in Germany, my home country. In this, and further essays to come, I will write about various aspects of prison conditions in USP Tucson. In this particular essay I want to focus on an aspect of legal mail handling. As I am not an English native speaker, please apologize for the less eloquent language.

Inmates are privileged to receive and send legal mail to their attorneys, to courts and to other official institutions in a confidential way, not exposing the content of their writing to the prison. This right is stipulated in various Standard Rules of the B.O.P. One of these rules deals with the expediency of how legal mail should be treated when it is outgoing. USP Tucson is violating a number of these rules however seriously however since a few weeks.

Regulations say that legal mail should be treated with priority, i.e., within 24 hours. However this B.O.P. owned rule is not respected. Legal mail, even certified mail is held back for several days before it is handed to the post office, notabene only after filing a complaint. Making copies of legal documents is a major task and sometimes even impossible. There is only 1 (one) copying machine available for 1,400 inmates. Staff on the other hand has a copier available in every office. The single inmate copying machine in the law library is out of service about half the time. Getting the copier fixed, on which so many inmates depend for their legal work, takes weeks and sometimes, deliberately, months. Even changing an empty toner usually takes 4/5 days. In such cases the unit team is supposed to make legal copies for inmates. However, members of the unit team only rarely show up, and when they do, they tell inmates it is not their job to make legal copies for them, which is not correct.

Legal mail is supposed to be picked up by mail room staff on a daily basis or inmates should be allowed to deliver their legal mail to the mail room, to satisfy the 24 hour processing rule. However, mail room staff does not come to the units to pick up mail, neither are inmates allowed to drop their legal mail at the mail room. Legal mail is not accepted in the general mail box. And the unit team, whose responsibility it would be to accept and process legal mail in such cases, is denying their responsibility and not accepting legal mail.

In essence, the prison deliberately blocks inmates from access to the courts, they are even blocking for contacting attorneys for legal advice. Legal correspondence is made very difficult for inmates to be sent out, either to the court or to an attorney. All these actions are in violation of the B.O.P.'s own rules.

Respectfully,
Meinrad Kopp

